

## UKRAINIANS IN SACRAMENTO

YURIY OLIYNYK

INTERVIEW

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Sacramento History Center  
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Introduction

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Born in Ternopil in western Ukraine in 1931; father was a lawyer. Ukraine was governed at that time by Poland and was not independent.

1:41

Attended Polish school (was bi-lingual "almost from the beginning") . . . first four years were elementary school, then high school lasted eight years.

2:37

Description of homeland.

3:10

Discussion of political conditions in Ukraine as Yuriy was growing up. Father had fought for Ukrainian army when it was an independent country; however, it was never independent when Yuriy lived there. Ukraine was largest non-Russian republic in Soviet Union and is merely a puppet of the Soviet government.

5:37

Political conditions in Ukraine up to 1939.

6:06

Hitler/Stalin's agreement about Ukraine. . . Stalin was to get Ukraine, Hitler got Poland. Soviets governed Ukraine -- took away all property, father lost his job in law and had to work in a bank. Schools were Russian ("the principal had hardly no education at all"). Study of Russian was compulsory.

8:25

Germans attack Ukraine and war begins again. KGB arrests Yuriy's father in the middle of the night, searches the house, and takes his father away in a black car. Yuriy's mother searches for her husband at the local prison and has no luck finding him. Germans come and "open the prison" -- many dead people inside, but Mr. Oliynyk is not there. Father eventually located at a hospital after a narrow escape from the Soviets.

- 14:19 Germans dominate the Ukrainian government . . . "this was no improvement over the previous invaders." Yuriy's father works as an interpreter for the Germans and Ukrainians.
- 15:56 Germans lose the Battle of Stalingrad and Russians once again advance on Ukraine.
- 16:31 Yuriy's family escapes from Ukraine on a train in a boxcar. They travel to Austria to a village near Vienna. Yuriy attends high school in a nearby town and learns to speak German.
- 20:00 The Oliynyks prepare to leave Austria, travelling on a freight train to Bavaria. Train is attacked and burned by American tanks on the way! Yuriy's family escape through the woods and stay for a short time in a nearby Bavarian village (in an abandoned glass factory).
- 23:32 Americans come to "liberate" Eisenstorf from the Germans. Americans rule the village during the day; Germans still search the area at night.
- 29:30 The Oliynyks and other Ukrainians leave Bavaria and head west through the Bavarian Alps in an old bus.

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SIDE B

- 0 The Ukrainian group arrives in the town of Plattling and contacts the refugee organization of UNNRA. They find temporary lodging, then leave for Munich on the train.
- 1:40 Settlement in a Ukrainian camp in Munich where Yuriy attends high school (his two sisters attend universities nearby). Conditions of post-war Munich described -- "conditions were terrible." Germans clear away the war rubble quickly and get things back in order. Ukrainians couldn't fit into the German system and looked for other solutions.
- 2:55 Feelings about returning to Ukraine.
- 3:24 Yuriy's sister applies for a visa for Canada; the rest of his family applies for the United States. They have a sponsor, but must wait for their quota (this takes four years!).

- 5:53 Yuriy and his family travel to the United States. . . "it was by far the best solution to our predicament" -- he discusses the language problem.
- 7:25 The Oliynyks settle in west Cleveland when they arrive in this country. They find a neighborhood of Ukrainians there (two churches, etc.). Many Ukrainians there were in the same situation.
- 8:46 Yuriy attends music college while studying English at the local high school (he had already graduated from high school in Austria!). After one year of English study, he is able to attend college fulltime and receive his degree in music.
- 10:10 Working in Cleveland as a piano teacher and in a dance band. Yuriy's father never is able to practice law in Cleveland (because of the language problem), and must work in a local factory.
- 12:08 Settlement in Sacramento in 1960 (ten years after arriving in the United States).
- 12:55 Ukrainian institutions in Northern California -- discussion of Ukrainian churches and the Ukrainian Heritage Club.
- 13:32 Ukrainians in Sacramento . . . Ukrainian picnic is a first step in organizing the group. Cultural club grows out of this, and now has a membership of about 150 people.
- 14:47 Ukrainian Heritage Club events.
- 15:50 Feelings about being Ukrainian and being an American citizen.
- 17:00 The Soviet Union today. . . conditions under the Russian system.